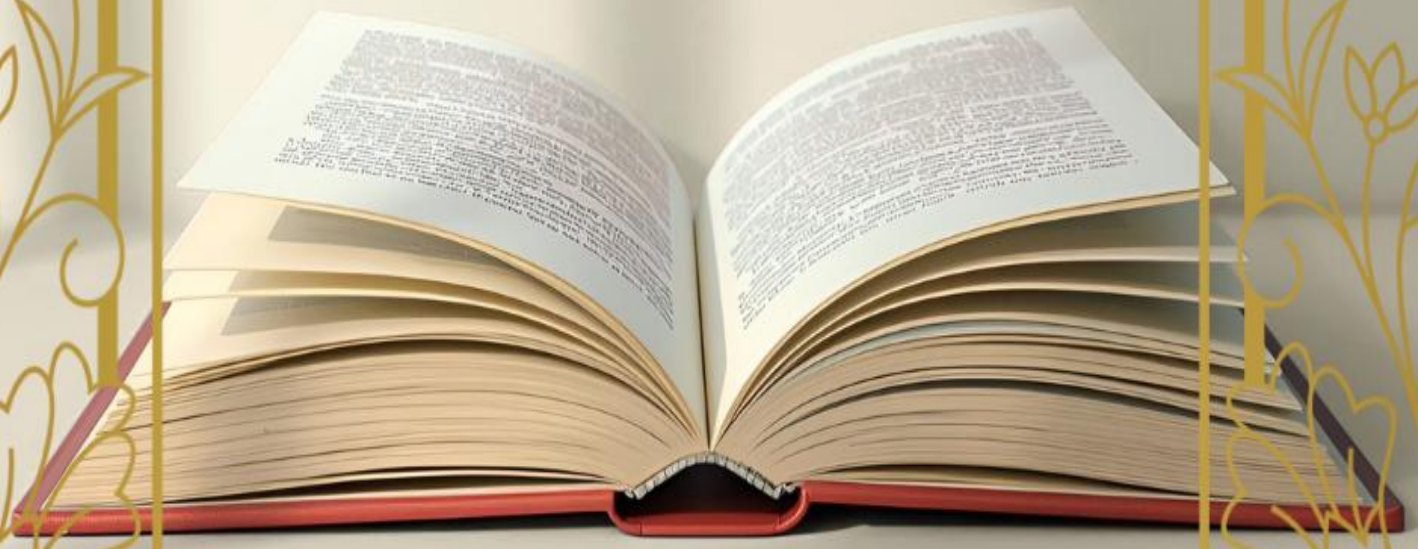
RESEARCHES IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF FAITH

Volume 1

Monotheism (*Tawhid*)

A Qur'anic and Analytical Study

Prepared by: Linda Abdullah



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Researches in the Knowledge of Faith

(Buḥūth fī Maʿārif al-Īmān)

Volume 1

A Qur'anic and Analytical Study of Monotheism (*Tawhid*)

Based on the Methodologies of Scholars al-Tabataba'i and Al-Haydari

Linda Abdullah

First Edition

Copyright and Publication Data

Researches in the Knowledge of Faith – Volume 1

A Qur'anic and Analytical Study of Monotheism (Tawhid)

Prepared by**:** Linda Abdullah

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, in a manner befitting His majesty and supreme authority. Peace and blessings be upon the noblest of messengers, our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), and upon his pure and virtuous Household.

Preface

In a world marked by rapid change and an increasing fragmentation of voices, the fundamental questions of existence are often marginalized, while moments of reflection on purpose and the Creator become increasingly rare. Contemporary thought has, in many instances, become absorbed in material and superficial concerns, leading to a detachment of the innate human disposition (Fitra) from contemplation of life's meaning, a separation of the spirit from the integration of reason and faith, and a disconnection of human conduct from enduring ethical principles.

It is within this intellectual and existential context that the motivation for this study emerges, grounded in the conviction that the Qur'an possesses a unique capacity to revive hearts and guide minds. This work does not seek merely to present doctrinal assertions or abstract theological claims; rather, it aspires to offer an analytical framework through which the reader may rediscover the illuminating guidance of the Divine, reconnect with the original Fitra, and engage with life in a reflective, purposeful, and ethically grounded manner.

Commencing with the Qur'an and Rational Reflection

The authentic starting point for knowing God lies in the Qur'an, as it is the Scripture that seamlessly integrates spiritual guidance with rational inquiry, addressing the human being as a unified entity of innate disposition (Fitra), spirit, and intellect.

The Qur'an does not call for unexamined or blind belief; instead, it consistently stimulates intellectual reflection and critical awareness through an open invitation to contemplate the universe and its order, as expressed in the verse:

﴿أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ﴾ (النساء:82)

"Do they not reflect upon the Qur'an?" (Surah An-Nisa, 4:82)

Through such reflection, the precise order of the cosmos—from the motion of celestial bodies to the coherence of biological systems—emerges not merely as a collection of material phenomena, but as signs (Ayat) pointing to a Wise and intentional Creator. The Qur'an reinforces this connection between sensory observation and intellectual certainty by posing foundational existential questions that awaken human consciousness from heedlessness, as stated:

﴿ أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ﴾(الطور : 35)

"*Were they created from nothing, or are they themselves the creators?***"** (Surah At-Tur, 52:35)

This Qur'anic methodology, which harmonizes rational demonstration with spiritual reassurance, has continued to attract reflective minds across cultures and historical periods. The intellectual journeys of figures such as Maurice Bucaille, Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), Muhammad Ali, Maryam Jamila (Margaret Marcus), Malcolm X, and Muhammad Iqbal illustrate the enduring relevance of the Qur'an as a living and universal source of guidance, rather than a text confined to a specific historical or cultural context.

The Purpose and Objectives of the Study

In light of contemporary intellectual challenges, there is an urgent need to reestablish Qur'an-based monotheistic knowledge within a coherent and rigorous epistemological framework. Modern discussions of Tawhid have often oscillated between rigid theological abstraction, which isolates belief from lived reality, and superficial simplification, which fails to provide adequate intellectual grounding in the face of doubt and skepticism. From this perspective, the present study seeks to construct a comprehensive framework that offers a dual contribution.

On the theoretical level, the study aims to consolidate the core concept of monotheism through an analytical examination of the model presented in "***Surah al-Ikhlas"***, to clarify the principal avenues of divine knowledge—reason, innate disposition (Fitra), and revelation—and to develop a disciplined critical approach for addressing contemporary intellectual deviations.

On the practical level, the study seeks to demonstrate the existential and ethical impact of knowing God by articulating the concept of the ethical embodiment of the Divine Names. It examines how sound belief is transformed into moral motivation and responsible conduct, contributing to the cultivation of the individual and the establishment of a society grounded in justice and benevolence.

Significance and Methodology of the Study

The "faith-based intellect" as a bridge to certainty. It employs a critical analytical and comparative methodology to examine Qur'anic texts, presenting the material with both scholarly precision and clarity. The study's methodological foundations and intellectual framework draw on the monotheistic treatments of the esteemed scholars **Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī and Allāmah Sayyid Kamāl Al-Ḥaydarī.**

This work integrates the analytical framework of Sayyid Kamāl al-Ḥaidarī with independent contributions by the researcher, encompassing chapters on critical analysis and the integration of theoretical and practical aspects. This combination of established methodology and the researcher's original insights aims to present a comprehensive doctrinal study, delivering the material to the contemporary reader with rigor, clarity, and scholarly objectivity.

Methodological Approach and Framework

Rationale for an Analytical Study of al-Tabataba'i and al-Haydari This research is designed as an "Analytical Study" of the works of **Allama al-Tabataba'i** and Allama **Sayyid Kamal Al-Haydari** for several methodological reasons:

- **Integration of Traditional and Rational Discourses**: Both scholars represent a unique synthesis of Quranic exegesis (*Tafsir*) —specifically the method of explaining the Quran by the Quran— and in-depth philosophical inquiry. While al-Tabataba'i laid the foundational framework in his monumental work, "*Tafsir al-Mizan*", al-Haydari has further developed these concepts, addressing contemporary intellectual challenges and modern epistemological questions.

- **Thematic Continuity**: The study analyzes how al-Haydari's methodology serves as a natural evolution of al-Tabataba'i's school of thought, particularly in the areas of divine attributes and the simplicity of the Divine Reality. By analyzing both, this research provides a comprehensive view of the development of rational monotheism within a structured academic framework.

- **Scholarly Presentation:** An analytical approach allows this study to move beyond mere descriptive narration. It aims to present the underlying logical structures of their arguments, making the profound depths of the "*Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah*" (Transcendent Theosophy) school accessible to a global audience.

The Quran and the Philosophy of Translation

To ensure a precise engagement with the text, this study adopts the epistemological distinction established by Allama Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari regarding the Quranic discourse. He categorizes the engagement with the Quran into three distinct spheres:

1. **The Quran as a Divine Text**: The Arabic wording is the revealed Word of God, intrinsically linked to its linguistic identity. In this sense, the Quran is untranslatable, as its miraculous nature (*I'jaz*) and sanctity are inseparable from the Arabic language.

2. **The Quranic Meaning**: This refers to the conceptual essence derived through exegesis, linguistics, reason, and context. This dimension is transmittable and can be elucidated in other languages.

3. Translation as a Human Interpretation: The translation is a human endeavor that facilitates access to the meaning but can never replace the original text. As al-Haydari emphasizes, what is conveyed to other languages is the "human understanding of the meaning," not the divine revelation itself.

Consequently, the term "Translation of the Meanings" used throughout this work is not merely a linguistic choice, but a methodological commitment to these principles. This work relies on the translation of **M.A.S. Abdel Haleem** (Professor of Islamic Studies at SOAS, University of London). His translation was specifically selected for its exceptional linguistic accuracy and its ability to render complex Quranic concepts into contemporary English while remaining faithful to the classical Arabic nuances.

It acknowledges that the English text serves as a cognitive tool —an **"Interpretive Bridge"**— to bridge the gap for non-Arabic speakers while maintaining the absolute distinction between the *"Divine Origin"* and its *"Human Interpretation,"* as interpreted within the scholarly tradition of **Allamah al-Tabataba'i** and **Allamah al-Haydari**.

Structure of the Study and Project Overview

This volume constitutes the first installment of an integrated five-part research series entitled "***Researches in the Knowledge of Faith "***. The project is designed as a gradual intellectual journey, with each volume addressing a foundational dimension of faith-based awareness in the following sequence:

❖ **Volume One**: "***Monotheism"***(An analytical study of the foundations of monotheistic knowledge).

❖ **Volume Two**: "***Prophethood"***(An analytical and Qur'anic study of prophetic knowledge).

❖ **Volume Three: "*Imamate*"** (An Analytical Study on the Continuity of Guidance and Knowledge)

❖ **Volume Four**: "***Resurrection*"** *A* Qur'anic and philosophical study of the afterlife and its relation to divine justice).

❖ **Volume Five**: "***Cosmic Norms in the Qur'an"*** (An examination of the signs of the universe from a Qur'anic and scientific perspective).

❖ **Volume Six**: "***Ethical Knowledge"*** (A framework of values and conduct as presented in the Qur'an).

The aim of this six -volume series project is to place the reader at the threshold of cognitive certainty, enabling a conscious and reflective engagement with the path of spiritual journeying (al-Sayr wa al-Sulūk), guided by the light of the Qur'an, grounded in insight, and exercised through free and responsible will.

As this work is presented to the reader, it is undertaken in reliance upon God alone. Any success or accuracy contained within it is by His grace, while any shortcomings remain attributable to human limitation.

﴿ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴾ (هود: 88)

*"My success comes only from God. I trust in Him and turn to Him"***.** (Surah Hud, 11:88)*"*

PART ONE

Foundations of Divine Knowledge

This section addresses the concept of Monotheism in terms of its definition and rational foundation, providing an analytical reading of ***"Surah Al-Ikhlas"*** as a concentrated Qur'anic expression of the monotheistic creed. It also discusses the most prominent intellectual deviations related to it, offering critical evaluation and corrective insight.

Monotheistic Knowledge: The Essence of Tawḥīd

Introduction: The Nature of Belief

To gain a precise understanding of ***Tawhid*** (Monotheism), it is first necessary to examine the very concept of "belief" **(*ʿAqīdah***). Although this term may appear self-evident to specialists in religious studies, a scholarly approach requires presenting it from its fundamental and general aspects, as a prelude to its use as a central concept in the subsequent chapters.

Clarifying the meaning of belief helps establish the conceptual framework of this study and prevents confusion between faith grounded in knowledge and mere cultural inheritance, which may lack awareness and certainty.

Definition of Belief in Language and Religion

Linguistically, belief **(*ʿAqīdah***) is that which is firmly held in the heart and accepted with certainty. It derives from the root "ʿaqada," which conveys binding, securing, and fastening. From this linguistic meaning, belief refers to firm faith and conviction free from doubt or hesitation. In religious terminology, belief denotes a set of foundational principles and truths that a person affirms, forming the framework for understanding existence, structuring one's relationship with God, and guiding one's perspective on the universe, life, and humanity.

The Meaning of Tawhid

In Islamic creed, ***Tawhid*** represents the most fundamental tenet and the foundation of religion, from which all other Qur'anic knowledge branches, including belief in prophethood, the Hereafter, divine justice, and Imamate. It is realized through affirming the absolute oneness of God in His essence, attributes, and actions. *Tawhid* forms the core message of all prophets, messengers, and divine revelations.

In this context, **Allama Sayyid al-Tabataba'i** emphasizes that *Tawhid* is the pillar upon which the features of Islamic belief are defined and distinguished from others, as the essence of religion rests on affirming God's transcendence above any partner in His essence, attributes, or actions

The Testimony of Monotheism

The Qur'an emphasizes the significance and centrality of the declaration of ***Tawhid*** (the Oneness of God) within Islamic creed, as stated:

﴿ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ ﴾ (محمد: 19)

"So, bear in mind that there is no god but God, and ask forgiveness for your sins"
(Surah Muhammad, 47:19)

This verse indicates that knowledge of God's Oneness precedes all other acts of worship, as the Divine address begins with the command to "know" before the command to "act." In this context, **Sayyid Kamal al-Haidari** explains that God commands His Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) to adhere to the knowledge of *Tawhid*, emphasizing the centrality of the testimony *"There is no god but Allah"* in establishing the foundation of belief. Sayyid al-Haidari further notes:

"*Whoever encompasses knowledge of Tawhid has encompassed all religious knowledge, for Tawhid is the essence and foundation of religion; if this foundation is disrupted, all other doctrinal knowledge is compromised*."

Numerous narrations also highlight the significance of this declaration. For example, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

"*Whoever sincerely utters La ilaha illa Allah enters Paradise; sincerity is that one confines La ilaha illa Allah from what God has forbidden*."

Categories of Tawhid

Muslim theologians and philosophers traditionally divide *Tawhid* into three primary categories: ***Tawhid al-Dhati*** (Unity of the Divine Essence), ***Tawhid al-Sifati*** (Unity of the Divine Attributes), and ***Tawhid al-Af'ali*** (Unity of Divine Actions). This division is analytical rather than multiplicative, intended to clarify the levels of understanding God's oneness in terms of His essence, attributes, and actions. ***Tawhid al-Dhati*** itself is further subdivided into ***Ahadiyyah*** (the Oneness in Essence) and ***Wahdaniyyah*** (the Oneness in Uniqueness). *Ahadiyyah* negates any composite nature in God's sacred essence, as in:

﴿ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴾ (الإخلاص: 1)

"Say: He is God the One" (Surah al-Ikhlas, 112:1)

Wahdaniyyah negates similarity, counterpart, or partner, as in:

﴿ وَإِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَّا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ (البقرة:163)

"And your God is one God: there is no god but Him, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy"
(Surah Al-Baqara, 2:163)

The relationship between the unity of essence, attributes, and actions is inherently interlinked. Belief in God's oneness in essence, through ***Ahadiyyah*** and ***Wahdaniyyah***, forms the foundation from which the other levels of *Tawhid* derive. Thus, ***Tawhid al-Sifati*** and ***Tawhid al-Af'ali*** are expressions of the unity of essence manifested across creation and existence.

Knowledge as the Gateway to Tawhid

Since the gateway to true *Tawhid* is correct monotheistic knowledge, this knowledge can only be realized through an understanding of God's names and attributes as revealed in the Qur'an. It is therefore crucial to caution that misconceptions may arise when one projects created attributes onto the Creator, contradicting the Qur'anic principle:

﴿ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴾ (الشورى: 11)

"There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing"

(Surah Ash-Shura, 42:11)

Conversely, limiting worship to formal acts without cognitive awareness empties devotion of its profound spiritual dimension. Worship, in its essence, is inseparable from correct knowledge, which prevents confusion between faith based on certainty and mere dormant cultural inheritance.

The Qur'an emphasizes this link between knowledge and existential value in:

﴿ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾ (الزمر:9)

*"Say, 'How can those who know be equal to those who do not know?' Only those who have understanding will take heed." (*Surah Az-Zumar, 39:9)

On this basis, *Tawhid* becomes the central axis of belief, with faith realized as an ongoing process in which intellectual affirmation and heartfelt certainty converge, allowing the believer's worship to grow in direct proportion to their awareness and knowledge.

The Practical Dimension in the Methodology of Tawhid

The practical dimension of *Tawhid* is manifested in the fact that it is not a static theoretical belief, but rather a comprehensive way of life that translates monotheistic knowledge into concrete conduct and actions. The monotheist links awareness of the Creator's greatness and attributes with ethical and social behavior, allowing the values of *Tawhid* to be reflected in every aspect of life, so that worship becomes a genuine expression of knowledge.

Sayyid Kamal al-Haidari points out that a careful examination of the path of the **Infallibles** (peace be upon them) reveals that true *Tawhid* constitutes an integrated system encompassing sound belief, refined ethics, and righteous action, each reinforcing the other. He explains this by stating:

"*What truly benefits people is Tawhid. Hence, the Qur'an links the good word with righteous action: the ascending foundation is Tawhid, and righteous action elevates it."*

This meaning is further reinforced by '**Allama Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i**, who emphasizes that *Tawhid* is not limited to a mental acknowledgment of the existence of the One God. Rather, it necessitates continuous practical commitment and the rejection of all forms of polytheism, whether overt or subtle, such as ostentation (*riya'*) or the heart's attachment to other than God. Accordingly, *Tawhid* becomes the root from which all moral values and behaviors emerge, achieving the desired integration between knowledge, worship, and human action.

Monotheistic Knowledge and Its Practical Foundations

It becomes evident from the foregoing discussion that *Tawhid*, in the Islamic conception, is neither a mere emotional inclination nor an abstract intellectual idea. Rather, it is an "integrated existential system" that forms the foundation of consciousness and behavior. Monotheistic knowledge represents the ultimate purpose of worship, for devotional practice remains confined to formalism unless it is grounded in awareness of the Divine names and attributes.

Here, the intrinsic correlation between knowledge and action clearly emerges: knowledge is the "ascending foundation," while action is the "elevating force," according to Sayyid Kamal al-Haidari's perspective rooted in the guidance of the Infallibles (peace be upon them).

This necessitates a continuous negation of all forms of polytheism, particularly "hidden shirk," manifested in practical disconnection from God—an emphasis strongly underscored by 'Allama al-Tabataba'i through his insistence on sustained ethical and behavioral commitment.

In this manner, the first axis paves the way for the transition from general epistemological grounding to direct Qur'anic application through "***Surah al-Ikhlas"***, as the unifying identity and concise expression of *Tawhid.*

Reflections on "Surah al-Ikhlas"

After clarifying the meaning of monotheism (Tawḥīd) and its central role in shaping Islamic belief, it becomes necessary to devote a focused discussion to one of its clearest Qur'anic expressions. "**Surah al-Ikhlas**" stands among the most profound chapters of the Qur'an in establishing the essential foundations of monotheistic doctrine and opening expansive horizons for the knowledge of God.

This brief yet comprehensive chapter, consisting of four concise verses, articulates the absolute oneness of God and His complete transcendence above all forms of partnership or resemblance. It affirms that God is One in His Essence, His Names, His Attributes, and His Actions—absolute perfection untouched by deficiency and incomparable to anything within creation. In doing so, it provides the firm doctrinal foundation upon which all other principles of the religion are established.

The chapter is known as "***al-Ikhlas***" (Sincerity or Purification) because its content purifies belief from the impurities of associationism and anthropomorphism. Whoever affirms it with conviction and understanding attains sincerity in monotheism, directing belief exclusively toward God. For this reason, it is also referred to as "*Surah al-Tawḥīd*", as it articulates, with unparalleled clarity, the oneness of the Divine Reality in Essence, Attributes, and Acts. Within Islamic theological discourse, the expression of monotheism has thus become closely associated with sincerity of belief, as both signify the purification of faith from all forms of distortion.

Islamic narrations emphasize the profound merit of this chapter, describing its recitation—when accompanied by faith and reverence—as a means of spiritual purification and salvation. Such descriptions do not point to numerical equivalence but rather to the depth of meaning it conveys, as "Surah al-Ikhlas" encapsulates the core of Qur'anic doctrine in its most distilled form.

Regarding its occasion of revelation, the chapter constitutes a decisive response to questions posed by the polytheists of Mecca and certain members of the People of the Book, who inquired about the "lineage" or nature of God. The Qur'anic reply came in this succinct yet comprehensive declaration, decisively closing the door to any corporeal, material, or genealogical conception of the Divine, and firmly establishing the principle of absolute monotheism in its purest expression.

The Significance and Virtue of the Chapter

The importance of Surah al-Ikhlas lies in its deep doctrinal dimension. It presents a concentrated Qur'anic model of pure monotheism and lays down the foundations of divine knowledge within a coherent epistemological framework rooted in transcendence. Through its concise verses, the chapter delineates the contours of Islamic belief with remarkable clarity, rendering it a primary gateway to understanding the doctrinal core of Islam.

Reports describing the chapter as equivalent to "one-third of the Qur'an" should be understood in light of meaning rather than quantity. The monotheism articulated in this chapter constitutes the axis around which the necessity of prophethood is understood, and from which the concepts of resurrection and divine justice emerge as essential manifestations of divine wisdom and perfection. In this sense, "Surah al-Ikhlas" is not a fraction of the Qur'an in volume, but rather its concentrated doctrinal weight—the essence that grants coherence and meaning to the remaining pillars of faith.

Methodological Note

The interpretation of "**Surah al-Ikhlas**" in this study is grounded primarily in the exegetical approach of the distinguished scholar al-ʿ**Allāma Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī**, as presented in his renowned work "*al-**Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān***".

This commentary is distinguished by its analytical depth and precision in articulating divine knowledge, rendering it a reliable reference for understanding the theological and spiritual dimensions of the chapter.

This methodological orientation seeks to demonstrate how knowledge of the Divine Essence, Attributes, and Actions—when derived directly from the Qur'an—constitutes the foundational structure of Islamic belief, and how it integrates rational inquiry with spiritual consciousness in a coherent and balanced manner.

(*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful****)***

﴿ قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ. اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ. لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ. وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴾

"*Say, He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him***".** (Surah al-Ikhlas, 112:1-4)

Introduction to the Commentary

Before engaging in the commentary on *Surah al-Ikhlas*, it is necessary to clarify the rationale for beginning the Surah with the *Basmalah*:

*"**In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful**."*

According to the methodology of Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*, the "*Basmalah"* at the opening of a Surah is not a merely formal or devotional formula. Rather, it functions as a conceptual framework through which the meanings and central themes of the Surah are to be understood. It indicates that the discourse of the Surah unfolds under the dominion of the Divine Names, with particular emphasis on Divine Mercy.

From this perspective, the exposition of absolute Divine Oneness (*Tawḥīd*) in "*Surah al-Ikhlas"* is not presented in abstraction, but as intrinsically connected to the source of mercy, existence, and sustenance. This clarification is especially significant for the non-Muslim reader, as it highlights that Islamic monotheism is articulated within a theological vision grounded in mercy rather than metaphysical austerity.

"Surah al-Ikhlas" consists of four concise verses. The commentary that follows adopts an analytical approach, examining each verse individually to provide a clear and systematic understanding of its doctrinal foundations. This method ensures that the principles of absolute Divine Oneness (*Tawḥīd*) are presented in a structured manner, accessible to both Muslim and non-Muslim readers, and highlights the logical coherence underpinning Islamic monotheism.

Verse 1: (Say, He is God the One)

(Say)

The Surah opens with a divine address directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), commanding him to proclaim the absolute reality of monotheism and to announce it to humanity as a definitive statement, leaving no room for misinterpretation. According to Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*, the opening word "Say" underscores the messenger's role in conveying revelation exactly as it was received, providing a decisive statement regarding the "Origin of the Truth" (*Maṣdar al-Ḥaqīqah*).

(He)

The pronoun "He," as explained in *Tafsir al-Mizan*, refers to the Divine Essence, which cannot be directly perceived by the senses but is known through its effects and attributes. It signifies the exaltation and transcendence of God. Each divine attribute—whether creation, mercy, or

knowledge—reveals a facet of His perfect sanctity, allowing humans to apprehend some measure of the "Majestic Being beyond full comprehension" (*al-Kayān al-Jalīl al-lā yufqah bi-kamāl*).

(Allah)

The proper name of God, "Allah," denotes the Divine Essence itself, encompassing all perfections and free from any deficiency. Al-Tabataba'i notes that this name serves as the foundational reference for all other Divine Names, pointing to the "Necessary Being" (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), who is entirely self-sufficient. Linguistically, this name is always the subject of description and never the description itself; for instance, one says "Allah, the Forgiving," not "the Forgiving, Allah." It functions as the central pivot around which all divine perfections and actions are understood.

(Ahad-One)

This term signifies the absolute uniqueness of the Divine Essence. Al-Tabataba'i emphasizes that the attribute ***Ahad*** differs from ***Wāḥid***: whereas *Wāḥid* can denote a numerical oneness, implying a part of a group, *Ahad* excludes all forms of multiplicity or composition within the Divine Essence, affirming an indivisible and absolute unity. For comparison, the Qur'an often pairs *Wāḥid* with terms underscoring God's unmatched and absolute power, as in:

﴿ أَأَرْبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴾ (يوسف:39)

"would many diverse gods be better than God the One, the All Powerful"

(Surah Yusuf, 12:39)

Verse 2: (God the eternal) (Al-Samad)

According to Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, *as-**(Al-Samad)*** denotes the absolute perfection of the Divine Essence, which is entirely self-sufficient in itself and in its actions. God is the ultimate refuge for His servants in times of need and distress, the absolute support in all matters. This attribute excludes any created or contingent quality; it affirms that God is free from physical limitations such as color, smell, location, movement, stillness, or modality.

In other words, God is entirely transcendent from the material world, embodying absolute perfection in His Essence, attributes, and actions. The definite article "al-" in *as-Samad* conveys exclusivity, signifying that He alone is the Eternal Refuge in the fullest sense. Together with the first verse, these two attributes present a complementary view of God:

"Ahad"

Describes the indivisible, unique nature of the Divine Essence, while *as-"Samad"* highlights God's absolute perfection, self-sufficiency, and the fact that all matters ultimately return to Him. This verse can also be seen as a precise theological articulation that explicitly negates corporeality or materiality in God.

Verse 3: (He begot no one nor was He begotten)

Following the affirmation of *as-Samad* in the previous verse, this statement unequivocally denies any form of begetting or being begotten for God, whether in a physical or subtle sense.

(*He begot no one*)

This negates entirely that anything could originate from God, whether dense, like a physical child, or subtle, like a spirit or soul. It also excludes all forms of contingent reactions associated with created beings—such as sleep, negligence, grief, joy, desire, or hunger—since God is entirely free from the properties of matter and their derivatives.

(*Nor was He begotten*)

This denies that God could have been born or created by another, emphasizing His eternal and unoriginated nature. He has no beginning or end and does not emerge from anything, unlike created things that originate from their elements—plants from earth, animals from animals, water from springs, or sound from ears.

This verse also addresses misconceptions found in certain religious claims, such as the assertion by some Jews and Christians that 'Uzayr or the Messiah is the Son of God, as well as pre-Islamic Arab pagan ideas that considered angels as daughters of God. This is reflected in the Qur'anic statement:

﴿ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُم بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَبْلُ ۚ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴾ (التوبة:30)

*"The Jews say, 'Ezra is the son of God,' and the Christians say, 'The Messiah is the son of God.' This is said by their own mouths, repeating what the disbelievers before them used to say. May God confound them! How far they have been led "(*Surah At-Tawba, 9:30*).*

Verse 4: (No one is comparable to Him)

The final verse of *Surah al-Ikhlas* reaches the pinnacle of the Qur'anic statement on monotheism, affirming the ultimate perfection in God's attributes and actions by negating any counterpart, equal, or peer in His Essence, Attributes, or Acts.

Regarding the term *kufū* (comparable), Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i explains that it denotes equality in rank, status, and degree. This verse conclusively establishes that nothing in existence can match or resemble God, thus affirming His absolute uniqueness in Essence, Attributes, and Actions. It emphasizes that the Creator is entirely free from any deficiency or limitation that human comparisons might suggest.

This rational proof is further reinforced by the guidance of Amir al-Mu'minīn, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), who advised his son al-Ḥasan (peace be upon him):

"Know, my son, that if your Lord had a partner, His messengers would have come to you, you would have seen the signs of His sovereignty and power and known His acts and attributes. But He is One God, as He has described Himself."

The Qur'an likewise underscores the interconnection between the oneness of God and the proper order of existence:

﴿ لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحَانَ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴾ (الأنبياء:22)

"If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but Him, both heavens and earth would be in ruins: God, Lord of the Throne, is far above the things they say" (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:22).

Thus, "Surah al-Ikhlas" crystallizes the essence of Islamic monotheism, highlighting its foundational role establishing certain knowledge that nullifies all concepts of polytheism and anthropomorphism. It provides a coherent doctrinal framework that safeguards the human intellect from conceptual deviation, underscoring the fundamental distinction between limited human concepts and God's absolute attributes. As Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) stated regarding the significance of this Surah:

"Indeed, the monotheism in "Surah al-Ikhlas" is like a fortified citadel; whoever enters it is saved and secure."

Thus, as presented in Surah al-Ikhlas, monotheism is not merely a statement of belief but a coherent epistemological framework that delineates a sound approach to knowing God on correct foundations, while affirming the transcendence of the Divine Essence beyond all forms of composition, resemblance, and deficiency.

Consequently, any departure from this framework inevitably gives rise to intellectual and doctrinal deviations, which necessitates critical examination in light of this precise monotheistic understanding.

Intellectual Deviations Concerning the Knowledge of God: Presentation and Critique

The concept of "knowing God" has historically been subject to various intellectual deviations, whether within certain religious currents that fell into anthropomorphism or within materialist and atheistic philosophies that denied the very principle of God's existence. Islamic and philosophical thought has systematically worked to correct these misconceptions and return to the "sound monotheistic doctrine" established by "Surah al-Ikhlas", reflecting the scholars' commitment to the integrity of the monotheistic method.

1. Doubt in the Existence of God – Critique from Within the Atheist Framework

Denial of God's existence represents one of the most prominent challenges posed by contemporary materialist philosophies, which regard the universe as a product of mere "chance," devoid of a creator or ultimate purpose. This perspective is articulated in the works of philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, particularly in his essay "*Why I Am Not a Christian"*, where he rejected the notion of God due to the purported absence of rational evidence. Richard Dawkins similarly advanced this view in *The God Delusion*, portraying belief in God as a "psychological inheritance" lacking empirical foundation.

2. Contemporary Intellectual Transformation (The Case of Anthony Flew)

These positions, however, have experienced profound transformations from within the atheist framework itself. A prominent example is the British philosopher Anthony Flew, who spent more than half a century defending atheism before ultimately acknowledging the existence of a "creative designer" of the universe. In his notable work "*There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind"*, Flew justified his change of position by stating: "*The almost incredible complexity of the arrangements necessary for life indicates that there must have been a creative mind behind it*.

This transformation represents a significant challenge to the materialist paradigm, demonstrating that rational contemplation of the cosmic order inevitably points toward the One, the Absolute. Similarly, the Dutch politician Joram van Klaveren provides a contemporary example of a shift from atheism and skepticism to faith.

While initially writing a book intended to critique Islam, he approached the Qur'an with an objective rational perspective, ultimately recognizing a coherent and intellectually compelling

argument for monotheism, which led him to embrace Islam in 2019, stating: "*Islam offered me a logical spiritual home.*"

Van Klaveren's experience was not isolated; Arnaud van Doorn underwent a similar transformation, culminating in his acceptance of Islam. Additionally, philosopher and scientist Alan Chalmers, in his book "*What Is This Thing Called Science?"*, emphasized that denial of a Creator is incompatible with the requirements of sound reason.

These intellectual transformations were not merely emotional impulses but the product of deliberate critical reasoning, arising from careful analysis and reassessment of prior materialist assumptions.

3. Anthropomorphism and Corporealization – Critique from Within Islamic Tradition

Among the intellectual deviations in understanding Divine Attributes are anthropomorphism and corporealization (tajsim). Anthropomorphism entails claiming that God resembles His creation in His attributes or parts, while corporealization asserts that God possesses a body composed of parts. Some groups interpreted verses such as:

﴿ الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ ﴾ (طه: 5)

"The Most Merciful established Himself on the Throne" (Surah Ta-Ha, 20:5)

OR

﴿ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِم ﴾ (الفتح: 10)

"The Hand of God is above theirs" (Surah Al-Fath, 48:10*)*

Literally, believing that God has a hand, a face, and a body like created beings. However, Muslim scholars from both Sunni and Shia traditions addressed these conceptions with rationality and clear textual evidence, affirming God's transcendence, as stated in the Qur'an:

﴿ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ﴾ (الشورى: 11)

"*There is nothing like Him***"** (Surah Ash-Shura, 42:11)

Within the Ahl al-Bayt school, Sheikh al-Saduq, in his work "*Al-I'tiqadat"*, asserted: "*Our belief in monotheism is that God has no likeness or counterpart; He is neither a body nor a form and cannot be perceived by the senses*.

” Some Qur’anic expressions that may appear literal are understood metaphorically; for example, *“I created [it] with My hands”* signifies power and capability, while *“the entire earth is in His grip”* denotes dominion and authority.

Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba’i supported this approach in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*, explaining that “His hands” are not physical but a metaphorical expression of perfect power.Similarly, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated in "*Nahj al-Balagha"*:

“*You cannot see Him with the eyes, but the heart comprehends Him through the realities of faith.”*

4. Questioning the Methods of Knowing God – Critique Through the Experience of Correction

Despite the clarity of the means indicated in the Qur’an for knowing God—reason, innate disposition (Fitrah), and revelation—some modern intellectual currents assert that knowledge of God occurs solely through internal emotional experience, often referred to as the “affective approach.” Others claim that discussing God through rational or linguistic means is impossible, as language is inadequate to express the Creator.

Philosophers such as Paul Tillich argued in “*The Courage to Be”*: “*God is not a being but the ground of being*,” suggesting that knowledge of God arises not through text or reason but through existential anxiety and self-exploration.

However, this approach empties monotheism of its objective content. Sheikh Muhammad Abduh responded: “*Reason does not contradict religion; in fact, the most reliable path to faith is believing in God through intellect and inference*.

Professor Jeffrey Lang also reflected on this in “*Struggle for Submission”*: “*I found in the Qur’an a dialogue with my reason, not a suppression of it, which astonished me and led me to open my heart to God*.”

5. The Problem of Evil and Injustice in the World – Doctrinal Critique

Some skeptics raise a classical objection in modern form: If God exists and is merciful, why does evil, injustice, and suffering occur?

This argument, however, involves a philosophical fallacy, as it overlooks that the presence of evil does not negate the existence of a Creator. Rather, evil is a deliberate “test” for human will, which is central to moral responsibility. Humans are aware of the distinction between good and evil, and

many instances of evil result from the exercise of human freedom in choice. The Qur'an explicitly addresses this principle:

﴿ وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ ﴾ (البلد: 10)

"And [did We not] show him the two high roads?" (Surah Al-Balad, 90:10)

﴿ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴾ (الملك:2)

"[He] created death and life to test you [people] and reveal which of you does best."
(Surah Al-Mulk, 67:2)

In the logic of faith, all injustice is temporary, every oppressor will face consequences, and ultimate divine justice is never neglected, as stated in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ ۚ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ ﴾ (ابراهيم:42)

"Do not think [Prophet] that God is unaware of what the wrongdoers do: He only grants them a respite until a Day when their eyes will stare in terror." (Surah Ibrahim, 14:42)

6. A Real-Life Example: From Doubt to Certainty

Dr. Mustafa Mahmoud provides a tangible example of a profound intellectual journey from skepticism to certainty. In the early stages of his life, he adopted a materialist worldview, as he recounted in his book "*Dialogue with My Atheist Friend"*. Over time, however, he came to understand that evil is part of the law of trial and the exercise of free will. God does not create absolute evil but establishes a balance that enables human choice.

He summarized this journey in "*My Journey from Doubt to Faith"*, emphasizing that apparent evil is, in reality, "concealed good." Faith emerged from this deeper understanding of divine justice and human testing.

These examples demonstrate that objections regarding God's existence or justice often arise from superficial interpretations lacking logical foundation. Rational reflection and systematic analysis can expose their weaknesses, offering a coherent epistemological framework that harmonizes the demands of reason and the integrity of the soul, balancing faith and moral responsibility, and establishing an informed understanding of the relationship between justice and freedom.

PART TWO

Paths to Knowing God and The Practical Implications

This section examines the methods of knowing God through reason, innate disposition (Fitrah), and revelation. It further explores the role of Divine Names and Attributes in cultivating conscious faith and highlights how this knowledge informs human behavior and ethical perception. By understanding God's essence and attributes, the believer develops a coherent worldview that integrates moral responsibility with spiritual awareness, guiding both thought and action.

Methods of Knowing God – An Introduction to Tawḥīd

In Islamic thought, knowledge and learning hold a distinguished status, as reflected in numerous Qur'anic verses urging humanity to seek understanding based on reason, reflection, and faith. God has honored knowledge and scholars, elevating their rank, as **stated in the Qur'an:**

﴿ يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ﴾ (المجادلة: 11)

*"God will raise in rank those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge***"**

(Surah Al-Mujadila, 58:11)

Distinguishing Between 'Knowledge' and 'Understanding'

In its linguistic and methodological sense, *knowledge* (ʿilm) refers to the process of inquiry and analysis aimed at discovering truths, while *understanding* (maʿrifah) is the fruit of this intellectual effort. Knowledge encompasses a broader scope, whereas understanding is more specific and focused. However, if understanding is confined solely to the material realm, it risks losing its existential purpose. Its highest dignity and significance emerge when it concerns the Creator of the Universe; the Source of all existence, for no rank or honor surpasses this pursuit.
In light of this elevated status, the most supreme knowledge presented in the Qur'an is *knowing God*, which constitutes the foundation of Islamic creed and the ultimate purpose of human creation. Human life, both religious and worldly, is oriented toward this knowledge, as emphasized in the Qur'an:

﴿ سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقّ ﴾ (فصلت: 53)

"*We shall show them Our signs on the far horizons and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth***"** (Surah Fussilat, 41:53)

The Concept of Knowing God and Its Connection to Tawḥīd

Several fundamental questions arise in this context: Can worship exist without knowledge? What precisely is meant by "knowing God"? How does it relate to the doctrine of Tawḥīd?

To answer these questions, we refer to a profound statement by Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him), in "*Nahj al-Balagha"*:

*"**The first principle of religion is knowledge of it; the perfection of knowledge is belief in it; the perfection of belief is its unification (Tawḥīd); and the perfection of Tawḥīd is devotion solely to God**."*

Reflecting upon this statement, one observes that the stages of monotheistic knowledge begin with understanding, followed by belief, pure unification of God, and culminate in complete devotion and sincerity in worship.

It is important to clarify that divine knowledge here does not imply comprehension of the Holy Essence in itself, which is utterly beyond human grasp, as the Qur'an states:

﴿ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴾ (طه: 110)

"They cannot span Him with their knowledge" (Surah Ta-Ha, 20:110)

Rather, this knowledge elevates the believer to a state of Tawḥīd and faith, freeing them from all forms of dependency and instilling certainty that God is the One Creator, unique in His sovereignty. This is reflected in the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his family saying: *"Worship God as though you see Him; if you cannot see Him, know that He sees you."*

This understanding is further supported by Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) quoting Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him):

"O people, God created the servants only to be known; when they know Him, they worship Him, and in worshipping Him, they find sufficiency in His service, without turning to anyone else." Islamic scholars have classified the stages, sources, and domains of this knowledge. Theologians, such as al-Ghazali and al-Juwayni, considered it an intellectual and innate necessity, arising from contemplation of the universe's order and leading to belief in the Necessary Being and His attributes.

Philosophers like Ibn Sina and al-Farabi viewed knowledge of God as the pinnacle of human understanding, since it concerns the noblest of existents. Consequently, it is essential to explore the keys to this knowledge and the foundational Qur'anic evidence that support it.

The Connection Between the Clear Verses (Al-Āyāt al-Muḥkamāt) and Tawḥīd

Understanding the foundational principles of divine knowledge constitutes one of the most essential keys to Tawḥīd. The Qur'an has explicitly outlined these principles, leaving no room for

confusion, by presenting them as the *"clear verses"* (*al-āyāt al-muḥkamāt*), which it describes as the *"Umm of the Book"* in the singular form.

This precise wording indicates that all such verses ultimately trace back to a single source: Tawḥīd, from which all other Qur'anic knowledge derives. God says:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ﴾ (آل عمران: 7)

"*It is He who has sent down this Scripture to you [Prophet]. Some of its verses are definite in meaning—these are the foundation (umm) of the Scripture—and others are ambiguous***."**

(Surah Al-Imran, 3:7)

The significance of these clear verses lies in their role as the primary reference for understanding the Qur'an. The ambiguous or unspecific verses (*mutashābihāt*) cannot be properly comprehended without reference to the clear verses.

Neglecting this methodological balance leads to doctrinal, jurisprudential, and ethical deviations, as exemplified by those who took the ambiguous texts at their literal value, resulting in anthropomorphism and corporeal attribution to God.

Consequently, the first pillar in knowing God is His absolute transcendence from any resemblance or likeness and His oneness in Essence, Attributes, and Actions. The Creator cannot be compared to the creation; if He is likened to it, humans fall into the error of anthropomorphism, and if a partner is attributed to Him, they fall into polytheism—both of which are rejected by reason and divine law. God is eternal, without beginning or end, and His existence is absolute, unbounded by non-existence or annihilation.

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) expressed this transcendence in his supplications during bowing and prostration, saying: *"Glorified and Holy, Lord of the Angels and the Spirit"*

Here, "***Subbūḥ "*** signifies absolute transcendence beyond all deficiency, and **"*Quddūs"*** denotes complete purity from any partner or likeness. Al-Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i summarizes this concept in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*:

"The clear verses are those that elucidate the reality of Tawḥīd because they are unmistakable in their meaning. All other ambiguous verses are referred back to them; Tawḥīd is the principle to which all Qur'anic knowledge ultimately returns."

Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī also affirms this approach in his "*Tafsir al-Kabir"*, stating that the clear verses constitute the fundamental references for resolving ambiguities. They negate corporeal attribution and anthropomorphism, affirming God's absolute transcendence.

Ways of Knowing God – A Gateway to Tawḥīd

There are multiple paths leading humans to the knowledge of God, which can be classified into three integrated levels: the innate, or natural, disposition embedded in human beings (*al-fiṭrah*); the rational and cosmic path, which reveals God's power through the systematic order of the universe; and the path of the prophets and messengers who conveyed divine revelation to humanity. These methods, though diverse in form, do not contradict each other; rather, they complement one another to form a unified epistemological trajectory toward Tawḥīd.

Nevertheless, the highest degree of knowledge manifests in the Names, Attributes, and Actions of God, for these manifestations contain clear evidence of the Creator's majesty and perfection. They combine intellectual comprehension with spiritual awareness in a harmonious integration, transforming faith from mere theoretical assent into a living monotheistic consciousness that actively informs thought and behavior.

The Innate Disposition (Fiṭrah): A Pathway to Knowing God

The fiṭrah represents the closest and most comprehensive pathway for humans toward the knowledge of God. Allāma Sayyid Kamāl al-Ḥaydari explains (*fiṭrah)* as the knowledge instilled by God within the human constitution, inseparable from the original creation. It is not acquired knowledge but rather an existential, present knowledge (*ma'rifah ḥuḍūrīyah wujūdīyah*) that accompanies human beings from birth and develops as they mature. The Qur'an affirms this reality:

﴿ فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا، لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ﴾ (الروم: 30)

*"[Prophet], follow the upright religion, the nature (fitrah) in which God has created mankind. There is no altering God's creation***."** (Surah Ar-Rum, 30:30**)**

Despite the fiṭrah's innate clarity, the influences of upbringing, social and cultural environments, and religious variations may obscure its light, though it remains latent within the soul. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) stated this reality clearly:

*"Every child is born upon fiṭrah; it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian."*The obscuration of fiṭrah is not limited to external factors; desires and heedlessness can also veil its light, necessitating spiritual refinement and inner renewal to remove accumulated darkness and restore its original purity. God emphasizes this in the Qur'an:

﴿ كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴾(المطففين: 14)

"*No! Their hearts have been sealed by the sins they have accumulated.***"**

(Surah Al-Mutaffifin, 83:14)

Even prominent thinkers have acknowledged this innate sense. Albert Einstein remarked:

"The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead… It is the foundational experience of every true religion."

Thus, although the fiṭrah is inherently clear and pure, it requires protection and cultivation to remain receptive to divine guidance. When preserved and coupled with reason and truth, it becomes a fundamental instrument for knowing God, naturally guiding the human being toward the recognition of the One Creator.

Reason and the Cosmos: A Path to Knowing God and His Oneness

1. Rational and Cosmic Proofs in the Qur'an

One of the greatest blessings God has bestowed upon humanity is reason, which is a prerequisite for moral responsibility (*taklīf*). God repeatedly exhorts His servants to reflect and contemplate the signs of creation in order to discover the truth of existence and reject blind imitation, as He says:

﴿ أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴾ (الغاشية: 17)

"*Do they not look at the camels—how they are created?" (*Surah Al-Ghashiyah, 88:17)

and:

﴿ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ، وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ، لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾ (آل عمران: 190)

"*In the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and day, there are signs for people with understanding*." (Surah Al-Imran, 3:190)

The rational path is based on the "*principle of causality"*, meaning that every effect has a cause and every outcome a reason; nothing can exist without an origin. The Qur'an conveys this principle in a probing, investigative manner, directing the human intellect to reflect upon the universe and recognize the necessity of a wise Creator behind it:

﴿ أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ ﴾ (الطور : 35)

"*Were they created from nothing? Were they themselves the creators*?" (Surah At-Tur, 52:35)

2. Views of Muslim Scholars and Philosophers

Ibn Rushd summarized this insight, stating: *"The cosmic signs in the Qur'an are proofs of the Creator that never vanish."* Reflecting on creation is thus a legitimate pathway to the knowledge of God.

Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized the role of reason: *"Reason is the lamp with which God illuminates the path of guidance for His servants; whoever extinguishes it goes astray, and whoever follows its light finds guidance.*

Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i (**in *Tafsir al-Mizān***) affirmed that contemplating the cosmic order necessarily leads to belief in God. Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī noted that the harmony and coherence of the universe point to the wisdom of its Organizer. Likewise, Allāma Sayyid Kamāl al-Ḥaydari highlights reasoning from "effect to Cause" as one of the broadest and most natural paths, reflecting the interaction between human awareness and the laws of existence.

3. Perspectives of Contemporary Scientists and Thinkers

This approach is not limited to Muslim scholars and philosophers; it extends to contemporary scientists and thinkers. The Canadian embryologist Keith Moore observed that the Qur'an's description of embryological development precedes modern scientific knowledge by centuries, underscoring the impossibility of its human origin.

Mathematician John Lennox urged reading the laws of the universe as evidence of a rational Creator, stating: *"The more I study mathematics and physics, the more certain I am of the existence of a great mind behind this universe."*

British physicist Fred Hoyle expressed astonishment at the order in nature, famously remarking: *"It is as absurd to suppose that life arose by chance as to imagine a tornado sweeping through a junkyard and assembling a Boeing 747.*

Roger Penrose noted the extremely low probability of the universe arising in its current form randomly, suggesting the presence of an "intelligent design" behind this precise order.

Philosopher René Guénon (**Abd al-Wāḥid Yaḥyā**), who embraced Islam, emphasized that reason, when freed from the constraints of materialism, opens windows to divine truth.
Similarly, mathematician Jeffrey Lang, in his work "*Struggle for Submission"*, recounted that the Qur'an addressed both his intellect and heart simultaneously, presenting an integrated system of rational and spiritual guidance.

This dual path—rational and cosmic—is not exclusive to scholars or philosophers; it is accessible to anyone who sincerely engages their intellect and reflects upon the "selves and the horizons," serving as a guide toward the knowledge of the One God and the affirmation of faith in Him.

Prophets and Messengers: The Practical Path to Knowing God and His Oneness

While reason is an essential instrument for perceiving truth, theoretical reflection alone is insufficient for elevating humanity to divine knowledge. Herein lies the role of the prophets and messengers, who were appointed as channels of divine guidance (*fayḍ*), bringing glad tidings and warnings, calling people to worship the One God and reject all false deities. Their mission ensured that the truth could no longer be denied once it was made manifest, as stated in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ ٱعْبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱجْتَنِبُواْ ٱلطَّاغُوتَ ﴾ (النحل: 36)
saying, 'Worship God and shun false gods".(Surah An-Nahl, 16:36)

The role of the prophets did not stop at conveying the message; they were living exemplars, embodying divine knowledge in belief, action, conduct, and ethics. The Qur'an presents numerous instances illustrating this practical dimension. For example, the encounter of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) with King Nimrod demonstrates the rational argument against disbelief and arrogance (Surah Al-Baqarah, 258).

Similarly, Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) confrontation with Pharaoh, supported by miracles and wisdom, sought to guide his people toward the worship of the One God, establishing the principle of monotheism within their hearts. The freedom from idolatry was a natural consequence of this understanding, not the ultimate goal in itself. The wisdom and justice of the prophets also manifest in the story of Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) adjudicating the case concerning the flock and the crops (Surah Al-Anbiya, 78-79).

This human model reaches its pinnacle in the person of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him), granted by God the highest rank of noble character and mercy. He served as the exemplary model for believers in his speech, actions, and character, as emphasized in the Qur'an:

﴿ لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴾ (الأحزاب:21)

"*The Messenger of God is a good example for those of you who look forward to God and the Last Day and remember Him often*.**"** **(**Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:21**)**

and:

﴿ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴾ (القلم: 4)

"*And you are truly a man of outstanding character***."** **(**Surah Al-Qalam, 68:4)

Allāma Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i notes that the ultimate purpose of revelation is to guide humanity to their Lord. The prophets were entrusted with this clear scripture, serving as lights for the intellect and pathways illuminating the heart toward monotheism.

The Ahl al-Bayt (Peace Be Upon Them): The Path to Knowing and Unifying God

Just as the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him) is the guiding light that illuminated the paths of truth in the darkness of ignorance, the Pure **Ahl al-Bayt** and the infallible Imams (peace be upon them) represent the authentic extension of the prophetic mission, forming a link between divine revelation and conscious human application.

They embodied a comprehensive model and practical standard for understanding divine teachings and implementing them in reality, thus serving as a clear path to knowing and unifying God. By "**Ahl al-Bayt** (peace be upon them)" we refer to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Ali ibn Abi Talib, Fatimah al-Zahra, Hasan, Husayn, and the twelve Imams descending from them, culminating in Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance).

1. The Rational and Scientific Approach (Nahj al-Balaghah)

The rational and scientific method of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) is manifested in their intellectual legacy, particularly in "*Nahj al-Balaghah"*, considered one of the most profound Islamic texts in presenting divine and human knowledge. Through his sermons and sayings, **Imam Ali** (peace be upon him) unveiled the truths of monotheism, established principles of sound reasoning, and linked faith with intellect and belief with practical wisdom.

The text covers various topics, including monotheism, creed, ethics, governance, administration, and jurisprudence, offering a comprehensive vision of humanity and society in light of belief in God. This methodology has inspired many Muslim philosophers and theologians in constructing rational proofs concerning the unicity of God and His attributes.

2. The Cognitive and Spiritual Approach (Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya)

The cognitive and spiritual method of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) is also evident in their supplications, particularly in "*Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya"*, a collection of prayers and devotions attributed to **Imam Zain al-Abidin** (peace be upon him) and transmitted through his children and close disciples.

These supplications constitute an integrated epistemological school, encompassing deep knowledge of monotheism, the cosmos, humanity, the unseen, the ranks of the prophets, as well as ethical and social guidance.
Thus, prayer is not merely a spiritual act but a means to consolidate the knowledge of God, develop balanced spiritual awareness, and open horizons of hope in His boundless mercy.

"Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya" has drawn the attention of scholars and thinkers; the Egyptian intellectual Muhammad Zaki Mubarak likened it to the "*Gospel"* in terms of spiritual depth, describing its supplications as a divine outpouring expressed through the words of Imam Zain al-Abidin (peace be upon him).

Al-Tantawi al-Jawhari, in "*Al-Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Quran"*, described it as: "*Above the speech of creatures and beneath the speech of the Creator.*"

American scholar William Chittick noted that it presents the Western intellect with a deep and human understanding of Islam, transcending superficial stereotypes.

3. The Practical and Experiential Approach (The Revolution of Imam Husayn, Peace Be Upon Him)

The practical methodology of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) reaches its zenith in the life of **Imam Husayn** (peace be upon him), particularly during the Karbala uprising. There, he manifested monotheism in its highest practical form by sacrificing himself, his family, and his companions in defense of truth and in preservation of the essence of authentic Muhammadan Islam. As he declared: "*I did not rise out of arrogance or rebellion; I rose to seek reform in the nation of my grandfather*".

His revolution expressed absolute servitude to God, a firm rejection of deviation from the path of monotheism, and a practical embodiment of the triumph of divine truth over tyranny based on power and domination—a timeless model for the victory of divine values over material oppression. The personality of Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) also captivated numerous Western thinkers. Irish writer George Bernard Shaw expressed admiration for his stance, considering it a human symbol of resistance against injustice. German orientalist Karl Brockelmann noted that his martyrdom deepened religious consciousness in Islamic history.

American historian Washington Irving regarded his sacrifice as saving the spirit of Islam, while British historian Freya Stark described its impact as touching the core of human conscience. German poet Goethe praised the tragedy as a supreme human catastrophe exemplifying the defense of hgh ethical values.

Integration of Knowledge Pathways

Thus, the methodology of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) integrates theoretical teaching, rational proof, and practical experience, guiding the human being toward a living monotheism based on knowledge, awareness, and ethical conduct. In this way, the pathways of knowing God—instinct, reason, revelation, and practical application—converge, leading to a firm faith that unites theoretical truth with moral commitment.

Ways of Knowing God through His Names, Attributes, and Divine Actions

The study and understanding of God's names, attributes, and actions is considered one of the most noble and elevated branches of knowledge. The honor of knowledge is derived from the dignity of its object, and in this case, the object of knowledge is God Almighty. God created humanity to know Him and worship Him, making this knowledge a key to devotion, a foundation for piety, and a basis for supplication.

Allama Tabataba'i emphasizes that understanding God's attributes is a necessary gateway to achieving "practical monotheism" **(at-tawhid al-amali)**. A person cannot perfect their worship without first attaining proper knowledge of the Divine. This understanding requires perceiving God's attributes within the framework of "absolute transcendence" **(tanzih)**, avoiding interpretations that might lead to "anthropomorphism "or corporeal analogy.

By adhering to this methodology, the creed of monotheism is preserved from philosophical or theological distortions while remaining rooted in "Qur'anic principles" and "rational foundations".The impact of this approach extends beyond internal faith, influencing Western intellectuals who have found in this conception of monotheism answers to their existential and rational inquiries. Among them is Professor Jeffrey Lang, an American mathematician, who stated in his book "*Struggle for Submission"*:

"*I found in the Qur'an a dialogue with my mind rather than its suppression and in His names and attributes, answers to my questions and a presence touching the depths of my being.*"

Similarly, the French researcher Françoise Chevalier recounts that her reflection on the meanings of God's names led her to conceive of a just, knowledgeable, and transcendent God:

"*I was searching for the image of a just, knowing, and near God, unlike humans, and I found it in the ninety-nine names of God, which brought me a serenity I had lacked in all my previous experiences*."

Acknowledging that the "Essence" (kunh) of the Divine remains beyond human comprehension, this section aims to present the "methodological principles" for understanding the manifestations of God's names and attributes. It highlights their revelation of divine greatness and power, and their close connection to the principles of monotheism, without delving into the detailed exposition of each name, which requires a dedicated study befitting their majesty.

Limits of Divine Knowledge and the Method of Transcendence: The Inaccessibility of the Divine Essence

Divine knowledge possesses inherent limits beyond which human reason and revelation cannot reach. Fully comprehending the essence of God—His inner reality—is impossible for all creatures, as He is absolute and unrestricted in existence. Consequently, the attainable path to knowing God lies in observing His manifestations in creation, the signs of His greatness, wisdom, and power, as well as the indications found in His names and attributes. The Qur'an affirms this absolute transcendence of the Divine essence, as stated:

﴿ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ ﴾ (الأنعام: 103)

"*No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision****."*** *(*Surah Al-An'am, 6:103)

And:

﴿ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴾ (طه: 110)

"*They cannot span Him with their knowledge***."** (Surah Ta-Ha, 20:110)

Acknowledging the impossibility of visual or intellectual comprehension does not negate knowledge entirely. Rather, it elevates it through the certainty of heartfelt faith. When Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) was asked,

"*Have you seen your Lord?" he replied: "How could I worship a Lord I have not seen? Eyes do not perceive Him directly, but the heart sees Him through the realities of faith."*

In this context, Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali emphasizes in '*Ihya' Ulum al-Din"*:"*Knowledge of God consists in apprehending what God has informed about Himself, not in perceiving the Divine essence, which is beyond both vision and intellect*.

This perspective aligns with the methodology of Allama Tabatabai in *Tafsir al-Mizan*, who asserts that apprehending the Divine essence without intermediaries is impossible, stating:

"The Divine essence is transcendent and cannot be perceived by the senses or confined by limits. It is known through His attributes and actions, which constitute the intellect's path to understanding Him, while everything else remains inaccessible to human reason."

From this standpoint, the central role of the divine names becomes evident. The "***Asma' al-Husna****"* serves as the means by which the intellect discerns some of God's attributes and actions, guiding worship and knowledge, while the essence of God remains exalted and beyond full apprehension.

The Divine Names: Pathways to Knowing and Unifying with God

The divine names and attributes constitute a gift from God to humanity, providing discernible manifestations through which humans may recognize aspects of His perfection and draw closer to Him via supplication, remembrance, praise, and glorification.

Allama Tabatabai underscores in *Tafsir al-Mizan* that the *Asma' al-Husna* represent the legitimate avenue to divine knowledge:

"The Most Beautiful Names are the supreme attributes through which the Divine essence is known. Through them, the servant turns to God in worship and supplication. Without these names, knowing God in truth would be exceedingly difficult, as the Divine essence is absolute and can only be conceived through these attributes."

Axis 1: The Reality of Divine Names and Attributes in a Monotheistic Perspective

To begin with, it is essential to clarify the meaning of the "divine name." It refers to directing the servant's attention to the Divine essence in the context of a particular attribute of perfection. As Allama Sayyid Kamal al-Haidari explains, a divine name is: *"That which points to the Divine essence in consideration of its perfections and attributes."*

A divine attribute, in turn, represents a specific aspect of the Divine perfection, revealing a facet of God's greatness and completeness, without implying multiplicity or separation within the essence.

Attributes such as "Al-'Alim" (The All-Knowing), "As-Sami'" (The All-Hearing), "Ar-Ra'uf" (The Compassionate), "Ar-Razzaq" (The Sustainer), and "Al-Mun'im" (The Bestower) all point to the singular reality of God, while the servant invokes the specific name suitable for their need and spiritual state. For example, invoking *"Allah, the Forgiving"* directs the servant to the Divine essence through the attribute of forgiveness, as in the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ﴾ (طه: 82)

"I am most forgiving towards those who repent, believe, and do righteous deeds."

(Surah Ta-Ha, 20:82)

Axis 2: The Greatest Name (Allah): The Comprehensive and Unique Characteristics

Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari regards the Greatest Name as ***"Allah"***, encompassing all of the divine names and surrounding them in depth, where its true power and virtue reside not merely in the utterance but in the profound reality it carries. Allama Tabatabai explains in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*:

"The Greatest Name is that in which all the beautiful names are united. Through it, the essence of God distinguishes itself from all creation. When it is invoked, the prayer is answered; when it is relied upon, affairs are accomplished, for it contains all that indicates the greatness and perfection of God."

Among its unique characteristics, this name—*Ism al-Jalalah*—is exclusive to God. It signifies the essence encompassing all perfect attributes, devoid of any flaw or deficiency. It cannot be attributed to anyone else nor applied to any creation, as indicated in the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَٰنَ أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ﴾ (الإسراء: 110)

"*Say, 'Call on God, or on the Lord of Mercy—whatever name you call Him by, He has the Most Excellent Names*.'" (Surah Al-Isra', 17:110)

Thus, every divine name or attribute (e.g., *Allah Ar-Razzaq*, *Allah Al-Muhyi*, *Allah Al-'Alim*, *Allah Al-Qadir*) reflects a facet of *"Huwa"*—the singular Divine essence—revealing unity within multiplicity. Consequently, the Greatest Name acts as the central axis around which all other names revolve, and to which all attributes ultimately return.

Axis 3: The Significance of "Al-Husna" in Divine Names

In Arabic, ***"Al-Husna"*** is the feminine form of the superlative ***"Al-Ahsan"***, used to denote absolute perfection and supreme beauty. Every attribute ascribed to God is *"the Best"* in His holy essence, representing completeness entirely free of deficiency, as in:

﴿ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمِ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴾(التين: 8)

"*Is God not the most decisive of judges?"* (Surah At-Tin, 95:8)

And:

﴿ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴾ (يوسف: 64)

"*He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.*" (Surah Yusuf, 12:64)

These superlatives highlight perfection in judgment and mercy far beyond any creation, reflecting God's absolute perfection. From a doctrinal perspective, the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ﴾ (الأعراف: 180)

"*The Most Excellent Names belong to God***" (**Surah Al-A'raf, 7:180)

Indicates that these names are exclusively ascribed to God. The preposition *"to Allah"* (li-llah) signifies exclusivity, while the plural form *"names"* conveys generality, encompassing all names that have attained the absolute degree of perfection. Allama Tabatabai clarifies in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*: *"Each name is perfect in existence and exclusive to God; no one shares in it."*

This exclusivity does not prevent God from manifesting aspects of His attributes, such as knowledge or mercy, to others through emanation or blessing. The created being possesses the attribute in a contingent and dependent manner, whereas the Creator possesses it in absolute necessity and perfection.

The Most Beautiful Names: An Epistemic Axis in the Monotheism of God

Many exegetes and scholars have emphasized the epistemic significance of the Most Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*) and their role in elucidating the reality of divine oneness.

This includes **essential monotheism**, which affirms that God is One, Self-Sufficient, neither begetting nor begotten, and without any equal; **attributive monotheism**, reflecting the unicity of divine attributes as expressed through these Names; and **active monotheism**, manifesting in the consequences of divine acts in the world.

This tripartite framework of monotheism (essential, attributive, and active) forms the methodological foundation adopted by Twelver Shi'i theologians and underpins the analytical approach of this study in examining the structure of Islamic doctrine.

Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari highlighted the importance of this epistemic dimension, stating:

"It is one of the purest channels through which a servant may attain knowledge of his Lord, as it carries a living reflection of God's attributes and illuminates the paths of monotheism and righteous action."

Similarly, Allama Tabataba'i, in his "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*, elaborated on the impact of this divine knowledge on understanding God's attributes and recognizing His manifestations in the universe:

"The Most Beautiful Names are the supreme attributes through which the divine essence is known. They are associated with the effects of God's lordship, including creation, provision, management, forgiveness, and guidance. Invocation through these Names constitutes turning to God in accordance with those attributes and represents one of the most effective means of attaining knowledge of God and drawing near to Him, as they manifest the qualities upon which the servant relies in worship and in monotheistic devotion."

Within this framework, these Names affirm God's perfection and absolute transcendence, distancing Him from all material limitations, deficiencies, or needs. As some scholars have noted:

"All that humans perceive of deficiency or need does not apply to God; He is characterized by the complementary attributes of perfection. For instance, the presence of ignorance among creatures indicates His knowledge, and the presence of weakness indicates His power. Yet, His knowledge is not like our knowledge, and His power is not like our power; He knows things in their immediate presence and creates them without any material intermediary, as we do."

This absolute transcendence aligns with the philosophical principle: *"The essence of truth is simple in all things and not in any one of them."* In other words, God is the origin of all existence and encompasses all attributes of absolute perfection, without being united with any form of created reality.

The Most Beautiful Names: Their Practical Impact on Worship and Supplication

Beyond their epistemic and doctrinal significance, the Most Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*) carry a profound practical and devotional dimension in the life of the believer. They serve as the means by which God has facilitated supplication and prayer, representing a concrete application of **active monotheism**. The Qur'an explicitly affirms this principle:

﴿ قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ﴾(الإسراء:110)

"*Say, 'Call on God, or on the Lord of Mercy—whatever name you call Him by, He has the Most Excellent Names.*" **(**Surah Al-Isra, 17:110)

A practical manifestation of this principle can be observed in many supplications that begin with praise of God and appeal to His supreme attributes such as generosity, grace, and mercy.This expression of gratitude exemplifies divine guidance and shows its impact clearly, as in the supplications of Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn Zayn al-Abidin (peace be upon them) in the *Munaajaat al-Shakireen*:

"How then can I attain gratitude? My thanks to You depends on Your grace, and whenever I utter praise, it obliges me to offer further praise."

Through these Names, the believer attains a direct path to divine knowledge, as they serve as signs pointing toward the sacred essence of God and reveal aspects of His perfection.
This understanding is reinforced by the narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Imam **Ja'far al-Sadiq** (peace be upon him) explained the wisdom of these Names:

"God does not need to name Himself, yet He chose Names for the sake of others, so that they may call upon Him. For if He were not invoked by these Names, He would not be known."

The Number of the Most Beautiful Names and the Concept of Enumeration

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) stated: *"Indeed, Allah has ninety-nine Names—one less than one hundred. Whoever enumerates them will enter Paradise."*

This narration has sparked scholarly debate: Does it imply that the divine Names are limited to this specific number, or does it rather highlight the virtue of these Names without negating the existence of others? What does "enumeration" mean—mere verbal counting, or a deeper understanding encompassing knowledge and practical application of these Names?

Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari clarifies that the Most Beautiful Names are not confined to a fixed number; rather, they are **infinite manifestations of God's absolute perfection** in knowledge, power, and grace.

Enumeration, therefore, is not merely a verbal exercise, but a method for comprehending the meanings of these Names and actualizing them in one's conduct. In this way, the believer's ethics and behavior become a reflection of divine attributes—representing the essence of monotheism.

Accordingly, the ninety-nine Names mentioned in the hadith are considered a selected exemplar, endowed with special virtue for those who deeply understand and practice them.

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) exemplifies the authentic application of this epistemic and practical enumeration. His life reflected these divine attributes in speech, action, and behavior, as affirmed in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴾ (القلم: 4)
"*And you are truly a man of outstanding character***."** (Surah Al-Qalam, 68:4)

The Divine Attributes: Their Role in Knowing God and Affirming His Oneness

The aim of discussing the characteristics of God's attributes is not to disclose the essence of the Divine Self, nor to attain complete comprehension of it. As previously emphasized, such knowledge is inherently beyond the capacity of human reason. Rather, the objective is to **reflect on the meanings of these attributes as presented in the Qur'an**, since they constitute the practical means God has provided for human beings to know Him. Without this accessible knowledge, avenues of recognizing the Creator would be closed, and the practice of worship would be invalid, for true devotion requires understanding of the object of worship.

The divine attributes open up **two complementary dimensions of knowledge**. The first is a general perception derived from contemplating God's power and the grandeur of creation, allowing humans to infer the existence of the Creator from the order and manifestations within the universe, as God states:

﴿ أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴾ (الغاشية: 17)

"Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?" (Surah Al-Ghashiyah, 88:17)

The second dimension represents a more **refined knowledge**, achieved by moving from general observation to reflection upon God's Names and Attributes themselves, a process described by some interpreters and philosophers as a *"journey from Truth to Truth."* Here, the inference is not from creation to Creator, but from the Truth—through His Names and Attributes—to His affairs and manifestations.

For example, when a believer recognizes that God is *"Compassionate"*, they seek to comprehend the levels of divine compassion and its effects, within the limits of their finite intellect, fully acknowledging that **absolute comprehension is impossible**, as God's knowledge is infinite, and the finite cannot encompass the infinite. As Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) stated: *"No description can encompass Him."*

These divine attributes are also characterized by **absolute transcendence**, free from any deficiency or need. God is self-sufficient, perfect in His attributes, and devoid of all negative traits such as ignorance, incapacity, or deficiency.

What humans perceive as weakness or limitation in the created realm actually reflects the perfection of the Creator: our ignorance highlights His knowledge, our weakness His power, our poverty His richness, and our incapacity His omnipotence.

Consequently, **contemplation of divine attributes serves as a fundamental epistemic pathway** toward understanding monotheism, laying the foundation for examining their categories and their role in consolidating theological knowledge.

Categories of Divine Attributes (Essential and Active)

Divine attributes can be systematically divided into **two primary categories** that serve the knowledge of God: **essential attributes** and **active attributes**.

1. Essential Attributes

These attributes disclose the hidden identity of God and are referred to by exegetes as the *"mothers of the divine names"*, including knowledge **(*'ilm***), power (***qudra***), and life (***Al-Hayat***).

All essential attributes converge in the attribute of *Al-Hayy* (The Ever-Living), from which knowledge and power emanate. These attributes are inseparable from the Divine Self and manifest to humans through the active attributes; for instance, God's power is revealed in acts of giving life and provision.

Scholars caution that the true nature of *Al-Hayy* cannot be fully grasped, as it refers to the Divine essence, the **absolute Unseen** that eludes human comprehension, yet is indicated by the pronoun *"He"* and manifests for humans through the **comprehensive Name, Allah**, which God has revealed for their guidance.

2. Active Attributes

These relate to God's actions toward His creation, such as providing sustenance (***rizq***), granting life, showing approval, and forgiving sins. Interpreters note that these attributes have **limits in terms of their objects**, as they pertain to finite entities in time and space.

It is worth noting that, according to Sayyid al-Tabataba'i, the Active Attributes are **"extractive"** (*intiza'iyyah*). They are derived from the level of action and the relationship between the Creator and the creation. Thus, these attributes are limited by their objects (*muta'allaqat*) and their manifestation in the external world, unlike the Essential Attributes, which do not require anything beyond the Divine Essence for their subsistence.

For instance, the attribute "***Al-Ghafur"*** (The Forgiving) corresponds to *severe punishment* when applied to human actions, and divine approval is contrasted by divine wrath. Thus, one may say: *"Praise be to God, the culmination of His satisfaction"* (since approval is finite in effect), but it is not correct to say: *"The culmination of His knowledge"* (as knowledge is an absolute essential attribute).

Hence, **essential attributes** are intrinsic to God's essence, **infinite and absolute**, whereas **active attributes** are expressed externally in the created realm, and thus finite relative to their objects. Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari emphasizes that these attributes are, in their origin, unlimited, stemming from God's complete essence, and only attain limitation when connected to finite creation. For example, provision (*rizq*) and creation are manifestations of absolute power, one of the essential attributes

Furthermore, the attribute *Al-Qayyum* (The Self-Subsisting, the Sustainer) represents the **perfective culmination of active attributes**, indicating that God exists by Himself, sustains and governs all of existence, and that all beings are dependent upon Him. The Qur'an affirms:

﴿ أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ﴾ (الرعد: 33)

"Then is He who stands over every soul and knows what it has done [like any other]?"
(Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:33).

Both attributes are highlighted together in the verse:

﴿ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ﴾ (البقرة: 255)

"*God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful***."**
(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:255)

The Center of Divine Unity and the Concept of the Simplicity of God's Reality

It is a fundamental tenet of monotheism that God is the **absolute center of unity**, as He declares:

﴿ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ﴾ (الشورى: 11)

*"There is nothing like unto Him" (*Surah Ash-Shura, 42:11).

Multiplicity has no existence in the divine essence; no composition or division can be conceived within it. His knowledge is not separate from His being, nor is His hearing or sight independent, since multiplicity is a characteristic of the created realm, which is based on diversity and manifold phenomena. The further one moves from the center of divine unity, the more one perceives multiplicity; conversely, approaching this center reveals the truth that all divine attributes are, in essence, one.

Therefore, it is incorrect to claim that God is one thing while His knowledge is another, or that His essence is separate from His hearing or sight. His essence is entirely knowledge, hearing, and power. Consequently, the **Divine Names** through which we are instructed to call upon Him are manifestations of these perfect attributes:

﴿ وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ﴾ (الأعراف: 180)

"The Most Excellent Names belong to God: use them to call on Him."(Surah Al-A'raf, 7:180)

Each Name represents a perfection of His attributes without implying multiplicity in His sacred essence. Accordingly, God's **unity is absolute**, and His essential attributes and Most Beautiful Names are not separate from His essence; rather, they are **identical with His essence**. In other words, His essence is entirely knowledge, entirely power, and entirely mercy. This is what scholars denote by the **"simplicity of divine reality"**, meaning that the divine essence in its absolute perfection admits no composition, division, or fragmentation under any circumstance.

The Distinction Between Essential and Active Attributes

Al-'Allama al-Tabataba'i clarifies in "*Tafsir al-Mizan"*:

"God's essential attributes do not change or vary, for they are His essence itself. Active attributes, however, are linked to His actions; they appear with the manifestation of the action and disappear when it ceases."

Thus, **active attributes** are contingent upon God's power in relation to existence, e.g., He is able to create or not create, to provide sustenance or withhold it. Essential attributes, by contrast, are intrinsic to His essence, and one does not say: *"He is capable of being alive or not"*, because their existence is necessary to His being; they are inseparable and immutable.

Active Attributes and Their Manifestation in Creation

Sayyid Kamal al-Haidari points out that active attributes are not something external to the Divine essence; rather, they **manifest from it when God turns toward creation**. They are, in relation to His essence, attributes, and in relation to creation, actions.

These acts are a **radiation of His existence**, akin to light emanating from the sun: the source remains unchanged, yet its effect becomes perceptible. This manifestation forms the foundation for **knowledge through reflection on creation**, as God states

﴿ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لأُولِي الأَلْبَابِ * الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّار ﴾

(آل عمران: 190–191)

"*There are signs in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day for people with understanding; who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down, who reflect on the creation of the heavens and earth: 'Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose—You are far above that!—so save us from the torment of the Fire.***"**

(Surah Al-Imran, 3:190-191**)**

Through this perspective, reflection upon the cosmic order demonstrates that **every phenomenon**, from the smallest particle to the vast galaxies, contains rational signs of the Creator's grandeur and oneness. Following this path, human awareness progresses from **observation to inference**, elevating knowledge from theoretical understanding to conscious faith. Divine knowledge thus becomes integrated into thought and action, with its effects manifesting in conduct and ethics—a process that will be examined more fully in the subsequent chapter devoted to the **practical and intellectual impacts of knowing God**.

The Effects of Knowing God on Scientific and Practical Life

The discussion of the effects of knowing God extends beyond theoretical or doctrinal considerations to encompass scientific, philosophical, and practical aspects of human life. Knowledge of God is not merely an abstract concept; rather, it provides a framework for understanding the universe, exploring its orderly laws, and recognizing the wisdom of the Creator, while guiding human thought and behavior toward a life aligned with faith-based values.

It is important to note that the scientific aspect addressed in this chapter does not aim to "empirically prove" the existence of God. Instead, it adopts a philosophical and methodological reading of the results of science and the patterns of the universe in light of the principle of the First Cause and divine purpose. In this way, knowledge of God becomes an interpretive framework for understanding the cosmos and human life, providing academic credibility without exaggeration or unverified empirical claims.

1. Scientific and Cognitive Impact of Knowing God

1.1 Knowledge of God and the Pursuit of Cosmic Exploration

Within the structure of Islamic belief, knowledge of God serve as a foundational entry point for understanding monotheism and existence. Genuine awareness of God encourages the exploration of natural laws and the understanding of patterns in life and nature according to a precise and harmonious system, leading to intellectual and scientific advancement consistent with faith principles.

1.2 Historical Examples: Muslim Scholars

Throughout history, Muslim scholars exemplified how knowledge of God could inspire significant scientific achievements. Their scientific endeavors were grounded in the understanding of divine laws in the universe. Figures such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina) in philosophy and medicine, Al-Razi in chemistry, Al-Khwarizmi in mathematics and Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham) in optics considered the human intellect as a manifestation of divine honor. For them, discovering universal laws was both a form of worship and a deeper comprehension of divine unity in creation.

1.3 Contemporary Examples: Modern Thinkers and Scientists

In modern times, this perspective continues to resonate in the experiences of certain scientists whose belief in God was reinforced through intellectual inquiry. Jeffrey Lang, an American mathematician, embraced Islam after a long intellectual journey integrating scientific reasoning and the Qur’an. Keith Moore, an embryologist, was influenced by the scientific accuracy of the

Qur'anic description of human development, concluding that such knowledge could not have originated from human sources alone. Similarly, Abdolkarim Soroush asserts that true knowledge of God forms the foundation for intellectual and rational progress within Islamic societies.

2. Practical and Behavioral Effects of Knowing God

2.1 Embodying Knowledge in Thought and Conduct

Some contemporary thinkers recognize that knowledge of God is not merely a theological abstraction but has practical implications for human behavior and social transformation. French historian Gustave Le Bon described Islam as a rational and ethical religion that established a robust human civilization.

Michael Hart, in "*The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History"*, notes that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) was the most influential figure in history, having built a society rooted in divine unity and justice. Philosopher Roger Garaudy emphasized that returning to belief represents liberation from alienation and that God's oneness is the path to freedom from materialistic servitude.

2.2 Moral Application: Emulating the Divine Names

The deepest practical manifestation of knowledge of God lies in striving to embody His attributes. When a believer recognizes that God is "Just,"They do not merely acknowledge justice theoretically but strive to practice it in every action. Understanding that God is "Compassionate and Merciful" transforms the heart into a source of mercy toward others.

This continuous effort to reflect divine attributes grants ethical and spiritual depth to behavior, manifesting in self-discipline, humility, and socially responsible conduct aligned with divine values.

2.3 Motivational Model: Knowledge of God in Prophetic Conduct

Knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) is essential, as he exemplified divine attributes through knowledge, conduct, and behavior.

Scholars emphasize that "no perfection was granted to a prophet except that it was granted to our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family)." The Prophet and his purified household serve as guiding lights in knowing God, as reflected in the Hadith:

"I leave among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah, a rope extended from heaven to earth, and my Ahl al-Bayt (family). They will never separate until they meet me at the Pool."

This underscores the inseparability of the Qur'an and the Prophet's family as two facets of a single truth, confirmed in the Qur'an:

﴿ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى ﴾ (النجم: 3–4)

"*He does not speak from [his own] desire. It is only a revelation revealed.*"

(Surah An-Najm, 53:3–4)

All genuine knowledge begins with knowing God and His oneness and ultimately returns to it. Monotheism is not only the foundation of religion but also the compass of human awareness in navigating life. Indeed, the essence of creation testifies to divine unity, reflecting God's majesty in every atom of the universe.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that knowing God and affirming His oneness constitute the foundational structure of thought and belief. This knowledge provides a comprehensive intellectual framework integrating reason with spiritual needs. Awareness of the divine essence and His perfection is the primary epistemic foundation necessary for understanding the purpose of divine revelation and human responsibility.

Belief in a great, just, and wise God inevitably leads to recognition of the need for a divine message and law, bridging the Creator and the created. From this perspective, the subsequent study of "Prophetic Knowledge" emerges naturally as an extension and practical embodiment of the monotheistic framework in human life.

Conclusion: Foundations of Monotheistic Knowledge

This research journey has been an in-depth exploration of the knowledge and Monotheism of God (*Tawḥīd*) as presented in the Holy Qur'an, attempting to understand creed not merely as abstract concepts, but as a methodology for life that guides thought and behavior, granting humanity a clear vision of the meaning and goal of existence.

Throughout the previous chapters, the research started from defining the essence and importance of Monotheism, moving through the analysis of *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* and the correction of misconceptions, reaching the exploration of the paths to Divine knowledge through reason (*al-ʿAql*) and innate disposition (*al-Fiṭrah*), and finally contemplating the Divine Names, Attributes, and Acts. Several fundamental conclusions emerged:

Core Results

- **The Unity of Knowledge and Creation:** Monotheism constitutes a cognitive principle that explains the universe and brings humanity closer to understanding the Creator's laws with critical awareness.

- **Practical Embodiment (*Al-Takhalluq*):** The true value of knowledge is embodied in behavior. The realization of Divine Perfections is reflected in embodying the effects of the Beautiful Names (*Al-Takhalluq bi-Athār al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusná*), bearing fruit as justice, mercy, and benevolence in the life of the individual and society.

- **Intellectual and Spiritual Immunization:** The Qur'anic methodology in Monotheism grants humanity a balance between reason and spirit, immunizing them against self-alienation and servitude to materialism, and leading to a life founded upon awareness and faith.

Transition to Prophetic Knowledge

From this standpoint, the upcoming research on **Prophetic Knowledge** emerges as the natural and necessary extension of this system. It will transition to studying the personality of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) as the means of Divine reception and the practical embodiment of Monotheism, relying on the dual authority of the Qur'an and the Prophet's Household (*al-ʿItrah*), thus completing the cognitive and practical framework for the believer.

Conclusion of Volume One

With the grace and guidance of Allah, the first volume of this research series, *Researches in the Knowledge of Faith*, has been completed. We pray that this effort be sincere for His noble countenance and beneficial to every seeker of truth and devotee of knowledge.

A Message to the Esteemed Reader

We hope that the journey through monotheism undertaken in this volume has illuminated new horizons of certainty and opened windows for a deeper understanding of divine knowledge.

Looking Forward to the Next Volume

In the upcoming volume of this series, we shall ascend further in the paths of understanding, moving from "*knowledge of the Creator* to *knowledge of the intermediary between the Truth and creation"*. Together, we will explore the dimensions of Prophethood and reflect upon the elevated station of the Seal of the Messengers, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), in an in-depth study titled "***Prophethood****"*. We look forward to continuing this illuminating journey in the light of the Chosen One (peace be upon him and his family).

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All English translations are cited from: *The Qur'an*, translated by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, 2004.

- "*And your God is one God: there is no god but Him, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy*." Al-Baqarah (2:163) p. 19.
- "*God: there is no god but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful*." Al-Baqarah (2:255) p. 29
- " *It is He who has sent down this Scripture to you [Prophet]. Some of its verses are definite in meaning—these are the foundation (umm) of the Scripture—and others are ambiguous*." Al-Imran (3:7) p. 33
- "*In the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and day, there are signs for people with understanding... 'Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose*.'" Al-Imran (3:190-191) p. 48
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About the Researcher

Linda Abdullah is an independent researcher in Islamic thought and comparative theology. Her scholarly work is the fruition of a personal passion for learning and a dedicated research effort aimed at exploring theological issues through a contemporary analytical lens. Through her publications, she seeks to provide a rigorous methodological framing of intellectual heritage, focusing on the epistemological foundations established by Allama al-Tabataba'i and Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari.

"Researches in the Knowledge of Faith" represents the inaugural stone of a six-volume scholarly series (Hexalogy) dedicated to constructing a comprehensive cognitive system of Islamic creed, employing analysis and comparison as fundamental tools for scholarly inquiry and exposition.

This research represents the opening volume of a comprehensive scholarly project aimed at clarifying the principles of Monotheism (Tawhid) and understanding the Islamic creed through an analytical approach. The study is grounded in a rational methodology and reliable sources, with particular reliance on the methodological foundations of Allama al-Tabataba'i and Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari.

This volume addresses the fundamentals of Monotheism (Tawhid), correcting common misconceptions regarding the Divine Essence and Attributes, with a focused reference to Prophethood in its relation to Divine Unity.

Subsequent studies in this series will explore Prophethood, the Hereafter, the Cosmic Order from a Quranic scientific perspective, and Ethics and Behavioral conduct in the Quran.

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